Our Bible Hour

THE SECOND GOSPEL

Francis S. Webster
M.A.

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

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OUR BIBLE HOUR SERIES

ST. MARK

Sidney C. Belcher,
Mackenzie College,
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ST. MARK

SOME STUDIES IN THE SECOND GOSPEL

BY THE

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GO forth, little book. Beside Professor Swete's scholarly treatise and Bishop Chadwick's luminous exposition you seem very diminutive and circumscribed, but you will fall into the hands of many who are not able to read these larger works, and if God is pleased to use your simple pages to cast one ray of light upon the glorious Saviour of men, the gain of the reader and the reward of the writer will be infinite.

All Souls' Rectory,
12 Weymouth Street,
Portland Place, W.
October, 1905.

CHAPTER I

Origin and Value

"Now do begin at the beginning and tell us the whole story." The request must often have been made during those early days when the triumphs of "the Name" made all men wonder. And who so ready and competent to answer as Simon Peter, the leading spirit and chief spokesman of the apostles. Some parts of the story he might be inclined to pass over through genuine humility or for very shame, but the main incidents of that brief but full ministry he would tell over and over again with the true eloquence of a glowing heart. And frequently among his audience there would be, as a close listener and an eager questioner, John Mark, whose mother's house (probably the one still known as such in Jerusalem to-day), seems to have been the headquarters of the apostolic band. The fulness of detail, which is

one of the charms of this second Gospel, is more than would be naturally given by an ordinary raconteur, but just what would be drawn from an eye-witness by the repeated questionings of an eager and interested youth. Thus to John Mark the whole story would become so familiar that when "moved by the Holy Ghost" he was able to write it with the clearness of one who sees as he writes the very incidents he describes.

He had the advantage of being familiar with all the surroundings of the sacred Life, and was doubtless an eye-witness of many of its chief incidents. I incline to this view from the internal evidence and the *a priori* probability in spite of the testimony of Papias that St. Mark had not been a personal follower of Christ. He was very probably the young man clad in a linen cloth who, after all the apostles had fled, "followed with" our Lord, and so narrowly escaped arrest, **14**. 51; it was, perhaps, the vigorous appetite of the evangelist, then hardly a full-grown man, that noted on two occasions what the other evangelists omitted to mention, "that they had no leisure so much as to eat," **3**, 20, **6**, 31.

This has been the traditional account of the origin of this gospel from very early days. Irenaeus, who quotes this gospel repeatedly (one of his extracts is from the last

sixteen verses, viz., **16**, 19), speaks of it as St. Mark's gospel, and declares the author to have been the interpreter and follower of St. Peter. Tertullian also has references to this gospel, and speaks of St. Mark as Peter's interpreter. Papias, quoting John the presbyter, declares that "whatever Peter remembered of all that Christ said and did Mark accurately wrote down, though not in the formal order of a literary composition" (*οὐ μέντοι τάξει*).

The personality of the author is, however, of little account. He is careful to throw the light upon the central figure, the Master, and to keep himself out of sight. The student will, however, bear in mind that the writer is the John Mark whom Paul and Barnabas took as their "personal attendant" on their first missionary journey, and who left them, whether for a worthy or an unworthy reason the historian does not say, at Perga. Though St. Paul refused to accept him a second time in the same capacity, Barnabas, his uncle, welcomed him, and they journeyed together to Cyprus.

Later on we find Mark cordially commended by St. Paul as a trustworthy and helpful colleague. He is now more than "a personal attendant," he is a "fellow worker" (Col. **4**, 11; Philemon 24), and "profitable for [the] ministry" (2 Tim. **4**, 11). And Peter,

who writes of him so affectionately, "Marcus my son" (1 Pet. 5, 13, *υἱός* the word here implies filial affection, spiritual relationship is denoted by *τέκνον*), links Mark's salutations to those of "the church that is at Babylon." Mark therefore was with Peter, gladly rendering the service of a son to a father, during the apostle's sojourn in that city.

Jesus Christ, as Peter knew Him, is then the subject of this gospel. The story does not open in Mary's home at Nazareth, the scene of the Annunciation, nor in the stable at Bethlehem, the place of the Sacred Birth, but by the banks of the River Jordan, where John is proclaiming the baptism of "repentance unto remission of sins." For this gospel, however brief, is not the work of a superficial observer, but of one who combined with minute accuracy and an artistic love of detail a capacity for going straight to the heart of things. So "the gospel of Jesus Christ" begins with the baptism of repentance. The forerunner who prepares the way is a plain preacher of righteousness, the Revivalist of the Desert. A sense of sin, not a knowledge of metaphysics, is the chief requisite for learning to know Christ. It is by the River Jordan, the penitent form of the wilderness of Judæa, that the Son of God is first publicly revealed.

This gospel is pre-eminently the "Evangelical Gospel," *i.e.*, the gospel for sinners. It omits many of the frequent references to the Old Testament, which make St. Matthew's the gospel for the Jew, it lacks the literary grace and the theological insight which characterise the third and fourth gospels, but it is second to none, it often surpasses the other three in its vivid delineation of the only Saviour of sinners. The word "gospel," which is not found at all in St. John, and occurs four times in St. Matthew and four times in St. Luke, is found eight times in these sixteen chapters. Twice in this gospel and nowhere else we find the Saviour's own words, "for My sake and the gospel's" (**8**, 35, **10**, 29), words which show how completely the Lord Jesus Christ is identified with that gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation," and the only good news for sinful men.

It is "the beginning" of that Gospel which is unfolded to us in this book. The river of salvation was flowing deep and strong when St. Mark wrote. Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Rome had already felt the power of its healing streams. We shall here follow the river to its source, and trace its rise among the hills and valleys of Galilee and Judæa. And this beginning is a plain record of facts, the story of the public ministry of Jesus Christ,

The author is neither theologian nor philosopher, but a special correspondent, giving us a full-length portrait of Jesus Christ as He lived and moved amongst men. So this Gospel is the Gospel of action, rapid, vigorous, vivid. We see the Saviour passing from one work to another with a peculiar swiftness of movement. The word straightway or immediately occurs 49 times in this Gospel out of 79 times in the whole New Testament. Christ lives before us as we read its pages. It is not St. Mark's impressions of Christ that we receive. He is careful to give us nothing but plain facts, and leaves the unadorned story to make its own impression upon us. Not that he has any doubt as to the conclusion which the facts demand. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel which is to be preached to "every creature," and is so certain and effectual that "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." But his part is not to draw conclusions, but to state the facts.

The value of this unvarnished record, this accurate report of a skilled special correspondent, is inestimable. It contains the sum total of the Gospel matter. It is not yet worked out into doctrine. It is, so to speak, the raw material out of which the full scheme of redemption

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has to be formed. The development of the doctrine will not be free from difficulty, for there is much concerning God and our salvation which passes all human understanding, but the Gospel story is as plain as A B C. And it is the heart of the whole matter. Men are saved from sin, not by understanding the doctrine, but by trusting the Saviour. Such personal trust springs from a clear knowledge of Christ, and the basis of that knowledge is an intimate acquaintance with the Gospel story. "Take care of the facts, and the doctrine will take care of itself."

This is how the Apostles learned. They first knew Christ as a real man, and yet more than man, Who won their hearts and deserved their full allegiance. They became convinced that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, but what that meant and the full bearing of all the facts of His life and death and resurrection on themselves and their salvation they did not understand until their minds were illumined by the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. This is how we begin as children. Little children cannot enter into the mysteries of the Incarnation or the Virgin Birth; they can only partially grasp the meaning of the Vicarious Sacrifice and the Victorious Resurrection, but by becoming familiar with

the complete story of the one sinless life, they quickly learn to trust the Saviour's love, to feel His goodness, to acknowledge His authority, to give their hearts to Him.

This is the way to get our own faith quickened. As we read and re-read the sacred story we are assured that we are not following cunningly-devised fables; that we are not trusting an abstraction or worshipping an idea. We touch the solid rock of a real Person. The fragrance of His life refreshes us, the majesty of His personality awes us. We feel solemnized as in a holy sanctuary, and yet safe and at home as in the presence of the Friend of our childhood. We sit once more at the feet of Jesus, and the faith that was disconcerted and languishing is invigorated and revived. Theological difficulties may still remain to perplex us, but they cannot disturb our faith. We have seen the King. The voice of the Bridegroom has reached our hearts. The touch of the good Physician has allayed the fever of our unrest. The living water from the Rock has quenched our thirst.

CHAPTER II

Characteristics and Contents.

It has been frequently pointed out that St. Mark's Gospel has not hitherto received the attention it deserves. A certain Victor of Antioch, whose date is not earlier than the fifth century, complained that he had been unable to discover traces of any commentary on St. Mark, though several expositions were in existence of the other Gospels. It is a significant fact that out of the ninety passages selected to be read as the Gospels for the Sundays and Holy Days throughout the year, only five are chosen from St. Mark, as against 33 from St. Matthew, 27 from St. Luke, and 25 from St. John. This comparative neglect of a book of unquestioned canonicity is probably due to the fact that "Irenaeus believed

St. Mark to have been written after St. Matthew, and from this view men passed by easy stages to the conclusion that the second Gospel was a mere abridgment of the first." A comparison of the contents makes it quite plain that this is not the case. A reliable authority mentions that some eighty verses in Mark are without any direct parallel in Matthew or Luke, and that the aggregate matter peculiar to the second Gospel is about one-sixth of the whole book. The view is now generally accepted that St. Mark's Gospel, instead of being an abridgment of St. Matthew's, is the earliest of the Gospels. It is certainly the most free from literary artifice. Out of the 678 verses in the sixteen chapters, no fewer than 459 verses begin with "and." Our author seems to have deliberately chosen to connect his materials together in the least artificial manner, wishing to hold the attention of the reader by the importance of the information that each sentence contains rather than by any charm of diction. And admirably has he succeeded. Who in reading, say, the eleventh chapter with its amazing wealth of graphic narrative and incisive teaching ever notices that all except six of the verses begin with "and."

This Gospel is also noted for the exactness and fulness

of its information. The reader who wants to know where and in what connection the various events took place, and who wishes to gain such a knowledge of details as will enable him to picture the incident, will find St. Mark more helpful than any other Gospel. Let the student note the abundant topographical and geographical data. Thus in chapter one, "in the wilderness," "in the River Jordan," "from Nazareth of Galilee," "in the wilderness," "into Galilee," "by the Sea of Galilee," "into Capernaum," "into the synagogue," "into the house of Simon," "into a solitary place," "throughout all Galilee," "in desert places." It may be said with truth that whatever the incident recorded, if we have any information at all as to where it took place, it is St. Mark who gives it to us. Some of these names of places, *e.g.*, the villages of Cæsarea Philippi, the borders of Decapolis, the parts of Dalmanutha, the land of Gennesareth, are not mentioned in St. Matthew or St. Luke.

Many of the exact references to time and place are of great value. What a testimony to the persistence of the healed demoniac when we notice that Christ was already in the boat when he made his request (kneeling, perhaps, on the beach, or having already followed Christ into the boat), that he might be allowed to continue

with Christ. And what light it throws on the eagerness of Jairus and the strong faith that surrendered the last half-hours with a dying daughter in order to secure the services of the Great Healer when we learn that Christ was still by the sea when Jairus came to Him. It is St. Mark only who fixes the village of Cæsarea Philippi as the locality where Peter made his confession of the Messiahship of Jesus. It is St. Mark who tells us that the exquisite incident of setting a child in the midst took place at Capernaum. It is St. Mark alone who tells us (how parents and children should bless him for it) that on both occasions when Christ had to do with little children, in the house at Capernaum and in another house on the farther side of Jordan (**9**, 36, and **10**, 16) "He took them up in His arms." St. Matthew tells us that Christ "laid His hands on them"; St. Luke mentions that "He called them unto Him." Only St. Mark gives us the materials for the most beautiful and characteristic picture that the mind's eye can conceive—a child of sin nestling in the arms of the Lord of Life and Glory, and (let the thoughtful reader mark it well) remaining there while Jesus uttered His solemn and terrible warning about that hell whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched.

But most of all we thank the Evangelist for the frequent notes he gives us of the Saviour's looks and gestures and attitude. We seem to hear John Mark interrupting Peter, and asking again and again: "What was the Lord doing when He said that?" "How did the Lord look when He uttered those words?" And so we see Jesus "sitting upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple," "walking in the Temple," **11**, 27; "sitting down and calling the twelve unto Him," **9**, 35; "going on in front" of His disciples, who follow Him with amazement and fear, **10**, 32; "standing still and commanding the blind man to be called," **10**, 49; "taking the demoniac by the hand and lifting him up," **9**, 27; "walking by the Sea of Galilee," **1**, 16; "sitting in a boat on the sea," **4**, 1; "asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship," **4**, 38 (a study of **4**, 35-41 will discover at least ten details which show that the story came originally from an eye-witness. The richness of St. Mark's account in comparison with those by St. Matthew and St. Luke is here strikingly exemplified); "turning about in the press," **5**, 30; "taking the blind man by the hand," **8**, 23; "walking on the sea as though he would have passed by them," **6**, 48. So again with the references to the Saviour's looks, we find the following ten:—

A look of mingled anger and grief because of the hardness of their hearts, **3**, 5.

A look of love to His own disciples as He explains that His spiritual union with them is a closer tie than the bond of earthly relationship which united Him to His mother and brethren, **3**, 34.

A look to discover and encourage the shrinking patient who had just been healed of her disease, **5**, 32.

A full look of confidence towards God which opened the heavenly storehouse and caused the loaves to multiply as He broke them, **6**, 41.

Another look to Heaven, but joined to a sigh as He realised how many were not willing to have the ears of their heart unstopped, **7**, 34.

A look to recall the attention of the disciples, as He rebuked Peter for trying to dissuade Him from following the way of the Cross, **8**, 33.

A look of love for the rich young man who lacked the one thing needful, **10**, 21.

Another look to rivet the attention of His disciples as He points out the peril attaching to the possession of wealth, **10**, 23.

Another look to the disciples to help their faith to rise to the level of His teaching, **10**, 27.

A look of searching inspection as He watched the trafficking going on in the Temple, **11**, 11.

There is no mention of the "look that beamed on Peter," Luke **20**, 61. That was too sacred a memory for Peter to make public.

The student will form his own opinion as to how far Peter's influence can be traced in the introduction or omission of particular incidents connected with himself. The guidance of the Holy Spirit being supreme we must not expect the full play of the influences that would naturally control the selection. St. Peter is mentioned 28 times by St. Matthew, 25 times by St. Mark, and 27 times by St. Luke. Of St. Mark's references, four are peculiar to him (**1**, 36; **11**, 21; **13**, 3; **16**, 7). We can understand why the angel's message, "Go, tell His disciples and Peter" was thankfully recorded, and also why, though the Saviour's rebuke is given with terrible force and preciseness in **8**, 33, the strong commendation which followed Peter's noble confession of Christ is modestly withheld. The internal evidence is not inconsistent with the belief that Peter's recollections form the basis of this Gospel; it is, however, totally insufficient to prove it.

The painstaking student will make his own summary

of the contents of this Gospel. As a very rough outline we may take the following:—

Section 1. Winning the multitudes.

Section 2. Teaching the disciples.

Section 3. Fulfilling the Scriptures.

Section 1 would embrace **1**, 14—**7**, 37. It contains thirteen miracles and three parables; six formal criticisms, and eight statements setting forth our Lord's popularity and the astonishment of the multitude. It also contains the call of the four and of Matthew; the ordination of the twelve and their mission; our Lord's secret prayer; the union of Pharisees and Herodians in a plot to destroy Christ; the charge of madness; teaching on the sin against the Holy Ghost, hardness of heart the cause of unbelief and the supremacy of spiritual relationships; Herod's guilty fears when he heard of Christ, and the whole story (far more dramatically told than in St. Matthew) of the murder of John the Baptist.

As the key-note of the section we would take the closing verse, **7**, 37, "He hath done all things well."

Section 2 we may call "teaching the disciples," and it consists of Chapters **8**, **9**, and **10**. These chapters are significant because of the thrice-repeated foretelling of the Cross, **8**, 31; **9**, 31; **10**, 33. This section contains four

miracles; St. Peter's confession of Christ; the Transfiguration; the Pharisees seeking a sign from heaven; the question concerning divorce; teaching on the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod, the danger of hardness of heart, the necessity of cross-bearing, the danger of being ashamed of Christ, and that Elias has come; the dispute concerning precedence; two lessons on the sacredness of childhood; the rebuke of the disciples' narrowness; solemn warnings on the peril of stumbling and the price of fellowship; the rich young man who lacked the one thing needful, with teaching on the peril of wealth and the abundance of present spiritual reward; the request of the sons of Zebedee and full expositions of the law of spiritual promotion and the supremacy of service. The key-verse is **10**, 45, The "Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many."

Section 3—**11**, 1 to **16**, 20—may be called "Fulfilling the Scriptures." It contains the triumphant descent of the Mount of Olives; the inspection and cleansing of the Temple; the participation of the Chief Priests and Scribes in the conspiracy against Jesus; the cursing of the fig tree and teaching on the power of believing prayer; the challenge "by what authority" with the counter-question concerning "the baptism of John" and

the parable of the rebellious husbandmen. Questions concerning tribute to Cæsar; "whose wife shall she be?" what is the first Commandment and the counter-question, "How is David's son David's Lord?"; the public rebuke of the hypocrisy of the Scribes; the widow's mites; the discourse on Olivet; the anointing at Bethany; the compact with the traitor; the last Supper; the agony, the arrest, the examination before the High Priest, Peter's denial, the examination before Pilate, the choice of Barabbas, the scourging and mocking, Simon the Cyrenian bearing the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Centurion's testimony, the burial in Joseph's tomb, the visit of the women to the sepulchre and the message of the Angel, appearances to Mary Magdelene and the two and the eleven, the missionary charter, the Ascension and the effectual co-operation of the glorified Lord. And we take as the key-verse, **14**, 49, "This is done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."

Section 1 is associated chiefly with Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee, with visits to the land of the Gerasenes, Nazareth, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, and Decapolis.

Section 2 is associated with Dalmanutha, Bethsaida, Cæsarea Philippi, the Mount of the Transfiguration

(Tabor or Mount Hermon), Capernaum, the district beyond Jordan and Jericho.

Section 3 is confined to Jerusalem, Bethany, and the Mount of Olives.

Although St. Mark gives only four of our Lord's parables, there is no lack of His teaching in this Gospel, indeed some of the more private instructions to the disciples are given more fully here than in Matthew or Luke. The distinct sections of chap. **13** should be carefully noted. The first four sections, vers. 1-8, 9-13, 14-23, and 24-27, give the answer to the first question, When shall these things be?

Thus the answer reads:

"Not yet; wars, earthquakes, and famines are the beginning," vers. 7, 8.

Then bitter persecutions calling for long endurance, ver. 13.

Then the great tribulation shortened for the elect's sake, vers. 19, 20.

Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in power, ver. 26.

The second question, "What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" receives two answers:

"When the abomination of desolation is seen standing where he ought not," the sign of the great Tribulation, ver. 14.

When the branch of the Fig Tree "is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves," the sign that the summer of the Lord's return is nigh, ver. 28.

The painstaking student will be well repaid for preparing a list of our Lord's sayings in this Gospel. The following are a few of the most striking:

"I will make you to become fishers of men."

"The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

"They that are whole have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick."

"Can the children of the Bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them."

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

"Can Satan cast out Satan?"

"He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost is guilty of an eternal sin."

"Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother and sister and mother."

"Making void the Word of God through your traditions."

"Nothing from without a man can defile a man."

"Let the children first be filled."

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

"Have faith in God."

"Ye belong to Christ."

"For My sake and the Gospels'."

"Many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

CHAPTER III

Our Lord and the Multitude.

THE Lord Jesus had a wonderful power of winning men. When summoning Simon and Andrew to apostleship He said, "Come ye after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men," and He certainly proved Himself Master of the art. This Gospel sets forth in every page how irresistibly the people in almost every place were attracted by Jesus Christ. "All men seek for Thee" was Peter's greeting to our Lord one morning in Capernaum, for Christ had slipped away before daybreak to pray in some secluded spot. And it was no exaggeration. The previous evening "the whole city had been gathered together at the door of Simon's house," and after the fame acquired by the cleansing of the leper, the Saviour could no more openly enter into a city, but remained without in desert places; and even

then they came to Him from every quarter. So the four men in Capernaum, who carried their sick friend, found it impossible to get near Jesus, so crowded was the house where He was preaching, and when the woman touched the hem of His garment the crush was so great that it seemed absurd to the disciples that the Saviour should ask, "Who touched Me?" A boat was engaged to wait upon Jesus, that He might get on board, and so escape the throng. Even in the remote districts of Tyre and Sidon "He could not be hid."

It was not mere curiosity that drew them. They were continually breaking out into enthusiastic testimony to His goodness and wisdom. So after the healing of the sick of the palsy, "they were all amazed, and glorified God saying, We never saw it on this fashion." And after the healing of the deaf mute, "He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." And almost to the last, when the enemies of Jesus were eager to arrest Him, they were afraid of the multitude; for though Pharisees and Herodians, and scribes and chief priests were all confederate against Him, "the common people heard Him gladly." Let it be clearly understood Christ's teaching appealed to the simple and

unlearned. Any Gospel which is above the heads of the poor is not the Gospel of Christ. The truths of our redemption afford abundant scope for the exercise of the keenest and most virile intellect, but unless the results of our study can be presented so that simple and unlearned folk can grasp them, we may be sure that our investigation has either gone astray or not gone deep enough.

Our Lord's popularity was not due to skilful self-advertisement. He did not employ any of the arts of the demagogue. There were no carefully-planned demonstrations or worked-up meetings, no appeals to class jealousies or political prejudices. At first "He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils," but later on He kept as far as possible to desert places, so anxious was He to work quietly and avoid notoriety. It has been well said, "Christ revolutionized the world, but by methods the furthest from revolutionary." On at least six occasions, **1**, 34; **1**, 44; **3**, 12; **5**, 43; **7**, 36; **8**, 26, we find Him hushing the testimony of demons, or giving strict orders that His work of healing should be kept secret. His various miracles, His divine works of mercy, were the overflowings of His heart of love to a sorrow-laden,

suffering people, they were never used as mere advertisements of His power. And our evangelist, watching carefully the effect produced upon the people, brings out plainly that it was Christ's teaching that impressed them most. "They were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." And even when evil spirits are cast out, it is still the doctrine that impresses them. "What is this," they ask, "a new doctrine with authority?" (1, 27 Alford.)

What, then, was there in Christ's teaching to win the hardy peasants of Galilee? It was certainly a strict doctrine. There was no condoning popular sins, no accommodating God's demands to suit human frailty or crooked circumstances. In language which seemed almost stern, Christ bade men pluck out an eye, and cut off hand or foot, lest, being made by these to stumble, they should be cast into the unquenchable fire. The law of divorce which Moses sanctioned Christ declared to be only because of the hardness of their hearts. His teaching was "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." But though our Lord's teaching was strict, and sometimes seemed severe, the outcast of Jewish society flocked to Him, and the first criticism

that fastens upon the Son of Man is the taunt, "How is it that He eateth with publicans and sinners?"

It was the compassionate, tender heart of the Lord Jesus that drew the people to Him. Our evangelist gives us a glimpse of that loving heart when he describes Christ's feelings towards the multitude. "He came forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." This divine compassion, this tender, pitying love of Christ melted the people and won their hearts. He did not scold them or lecture them. He sorrowed over them. It was not their poverty that moved Him, though He could feel for them and rejoiced to feed the hungry. It was their lost and helpless condition. He saw them as in the light of Eternity. Most of them were prosperous so far as this world is concerned. Galilee was almost as populous as Lancashire and the centre of successful industries. But Christ looked beneath the surface. He saw them as sheep not having a shepherd, their lives were without God, their hearts were without love. Helpless creatures they were whom nothing but the love of God could shelter and satisfy. He realized what they lacked, for He well knew that love. So a

great pity filled His heart and shone out of His eyes as He gazed upon them. The people felt it, and were subdued and melted by it. It appealed to their highest instincts. It made them feel how deep their need must be and how real their peril since they awakened in Him such a kind compassion towards them. So He taught them many things, chiefly their need of God and how, through Himself, that need could be fully met.

The Lord Jesus feels the same compassion for men and women to-day. His attitude towards us has not changed. Some alas, reject His compassion and repudiate His estimate of our need. In their shallow self-conceit they think the repeated "Have mercy upon us" of the Prayer-book unworthy of self-respecting men. If Christ would be content with a place among the world's teachers and reformers they would welcome Him and set Him at the head of the list. But Christ did not come to make the wise wiser or the good better. "I came," He said, "not to call the righteous but sinners." He does not regard us with interest and appreciation as promising pupils already possessing some knowledge and goodness soon, under His teaching, to develop and reach a high standard of excellence. He is moved with compassion because of our peril and need.

It was not the accidental features of the social and religious life of Palestine that moved His pity. The evils that awakened His compassion were inherent in man as man. He saw that right down in the depths of their being all mankind are sick and sad. "Out of the heart of man," He said, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness. This was His diagnosis of man's moral condition. It was this hereditary disease that moved His pity. To save men from its cruel grasp He had come from Heaven and was on His way to the Cross. The people felt the power of the love that was already driving Jesus to the Cross. It is as "lifted up from the earth" that Christ now draws all men unto Him, and then, too, it was the Love which more than any Roman nails held Jesus to the Cross, that drew to Him the sinners of Galilee. Christ certainly claimed the power to heal their spiritual sickness and meet all their need. The student should carefully notice the various titles that the Lord Jesus takes to Himself. Thus, in chapter two, He is the Son of Man with power on earth to forgive sins, and therefore His first word to the sick of the palsy and many another needy one as well is

"Be of good cheer."* He is the Physician of whom the sick have need. He is the Bridegroom whose presence dispels all gloom. He is the Lord of the Sabbath able in the midst of the world's toil and turmoil to impart true rest and heart's ease.

So the sinful, the sick, the sad, the weary found their way to the Lord Jesus. John the Baptist had roused to fresh activity the conscience of the people. Christ and His offer of pardon and salvation again tested all who came in contact with Him. The sincere, the men of broken and contrite heart were drawn to Him. The superficial and self-sufficient ones were repelled. It is so still. "The preaching of the Cross" (and there is no true preaching of Christ which does not exhibit Christ crucified) is to some foolishness and to others it is the power of God unto salvation. Naaman stumbled when told to bathe in Jordan. He thought that as the leprosy showed in one particular place the remedy ought to be applied there. Sin, however, is not a local but a constitutional disease. It may come to the surface in different forms of excess, or violence, or uncleanness, or deceit, and human pride is always ready to believe that a little local adjustment and special pains

*One word θαζσεῖ occurs **6,** 50, and **10,** 49. See also Matt. **9,** 2, and **22,** John **16, 33,** Acts **23,** 11.

in grappling with the various manifestations of the evil will put things right. But it is not so. Education and legislation may "wave" their hands "over the place" and apply every conceivable remedy, but unless the hand of the good Physician is upon the sufferer and the virtue of His atoning Sacrifice combats the disease, the improvement will be only superficial and transitory. It was the new hope that Christ awakened in them that drew to Him the sinful and outcast. The Saviour's doctrine was with authority; His gospel worked. He compared the word of God to seed. The essence of seed is its vitality. You cannot define it or analyse it. No microscope will detect it, no chemicals reveal it. But it works; it answers to experiment. It reveals its presence by its supernatural achievements. So with the virtue that came from Jesus to the sin-sick souls around Him. They lost their burdens and found peace. The soiling of despair was removed from their guilty hearts which in a moment were purified by faith and made strong with hope. A tide of joy rolled into their lightened souls and new song broke out to welcome their Lord. The children of the Bridechamber could not fast because the Bridegroom was with them. They were right to rejoice and sing. The very stones would cry out if they held their peace

It is false to contend that in sympathy with the world's misery the people of God must needs be sad. To the child of God, joy is not a luxury but a necessity. Let the desert land reproach the garden of the Nile and say you have no right to blossom and rejoice while we remain sterile and dry. And the garden land replies, how can we be otherwise when the sweet waters of the Nile flow over us year by year. Even so, the presence of Christ is a defence against all ennui, and accidie, and gloom, what wonder that the simple peasants of Galilee were drawn to Him instinctively and learned to sit down under His shadow with great delight.

CHAPTER IV

Our Lord and His Critics

St. Mark is very careful to keep before his readers the opposition manifested against our Lord in certain quarters. Side by side with the enthusiastic reception of the multitude he sets forth perpetual fault-findings, and plottings to destroy. It is interesting to notice how the various sections of the community are, one after another, drawn into the conspiracy. In Chapter **2** the Scribes and Pharisees are the first objectors. In Chapter **3** we find the Herodians joining with the Pharisees and consulting how they might destroy Jesus. Certain scribes which came down from Jerusalem are also mentioned in the same chapter ; they were probably a deputation from the chief priests, and sought to destroy our Lord's prestige by declaring that He was in collusion with Beelzebub. The prejudice of the men of Nazareth

brought out in the **6th** Chapter is so stubborn and unreasonable that our Lord marvels at their unbelief. In the **7th** Chapter the Pharisees unite with the Scribes which had come from Jerusalem. In the **8th** Chapter the Pharisees are acting alone and they tempt our Lord by seeking of Him a sign from heaven. They are found, too, in the **9th** Chapter returning to the attack with their question about Divorce. The chief priests are mentioned in Chapter **11** as seeking to destroy Jesus; and in the same chapter a formal deputation of the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, come up to our Lord as He was walking in the Temple with the formal challenge, "By what authority doeth Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things?" So, again, as recorded in the **11th** Chapter, the Pharisees and Herodians seek "to catch Him in His words," and the Sadducees put their question about the Resurrection. Finally, in Chapter **14**, we have the traitor Apostle going to the chief priests and covenanting for a money payment to betray His Master.

The opposition was in three stages. (1) The raising of certain natural and genuine objections to the new spirit and message of the Gospel. (2) The official accusation manufactured in Jerusalem which only those who

had quenched the Holy Spirit could for a moment entertain, viz., that Christ was in league with Satan. (3) Carefully-prepared traps and pitfalls by which they hoped to lure the Saviour into some revolutionary or wrong word or deed.

To the first stage belong the five questions in Chapters **2**, **6**, and **7**: Why eat with publicans and sinners? Why not fast? Why pluck corn on the Sabbath? Is not this the Carpenter? Why eat with unwashen hands? In the second stage we place the terrible charge of **3**, 22 with the complete answer of vers. 23-27 and the awful warning that follows concerning those who are "guilty of an eternal sin."

To the third stage belong the seeking of a sign from Heaven, the formal challenge "By what authority doest Thou these things?" and four questions concerning Divorce, tribute to Cæsar, "whose wife shall she be," and "what is the first commandment."

Our Lord's teaching could not fail to awaken criticism. Two things were obvious to all. He allowed a new freedom in the practise of godliness, and He introduced a new factor in the pursuit of truth. This new factor, His own personal authority, was always conspicuous. In Capernaum they were astonished at it,

and it led to questioning among themselves what this tone of authority so different from the teaching of the scribes implied, and when He taught in the synagogue at Nazareth they were offended at it, "What is the wisdom that is given unto this man? Is not this the Carpenter?" It was this that roused the opposition of the learned classes. Himself the Truth our Lord never for a moment took the position of a seeker after Truth. But the Jews avoided a frontal attack, for to draw attention to the fact that Christ claimed to speak and act with Divine authority would not help their cause. His whole bearing and conduct agreed therewith so perfectly. So they seized upon the other distinguishing feature of His mission, the new freedom which He allowed in the practise of godliness; and sought to fasten upon Him charges of laxity and inconsistency.

a. They saw Him eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. One such, Matthew, of Capernaum, He had called to be one of the twelve, summoning him when he was at the receipt of custom, breaking with one sovereign word the fascination of money making and winning the man with all his powers and affections to Himself. So when the Pharisees saw Him being

entertained at a great feast in Matthew's house they went to the disciples, hoping to undermine their loyal confidence, and said, "How is it that your Master eateth with publicans and sinners?"

Our Lord knew perfectly the unsatisfactory character of these taxpayers as a class. In His public teaching He places them in the same category with the heathen and with harlots. And yet, while the typical Pharisee prayed daily "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as the publicans," Jesus Christ mixed with them freely and earned the title the "Friend of publicans and sinners." Not that He in any way countenanced their wrong-doings. The Pharisees wished to imply that He was indifferent to their vices and found their moral laxity congenial. Far from it. We can only faintly conceive what abhorrence and loathing filled His soul because of men's sin. The Lord never for a moment lost sight of His Divine mission. He went as the Physician of souls, strong in His impregnability to all moral infection, and His example only warrants us in going where we, too, may have a healing influence. It condemns all Pharasaic separation on the ground of personal superiority, for it is the essence of the Gospel that so far as our acceptance with God is concerned there is no

difference between the moral and the criminal, between a Nathanael and a Magdalene. But it does not condemn the separation of the humble child of God who, knowing his natural corruption and the fatal fascination of some forms of sin, dare not for mere amusement, or to please men, expose himself to an atmosphere of lewdness or profanity. To save the lost the true Christian will go anywhere. Mercy in the highest form of sacrifice. But it is no mercy to lost souls so to become identified with their folly and forgetfulness of God that the salt loses its savour and our presence ceases to remind them of Eternal things.

b. Our Lord's attitude towards the Sabbath was another matter in which the new freedom of the Gospel was conspicuous. He refused to be bound by Rabbinical additions which had sadly obscured the goodness and mercy of the Divine command. His first miracle in Capernaum, the casting out of an unclean spirit, was on the Sabbath day in the synagogue. There was not a word about any profanation of the Sabbath. The people were amazed at His authority and power; it never occurred to them to question the lawfulness of such Divine beneficence. But on another occasion when a man with a withered hand was in the synagogue they

watched Him whether He would heal him on the Sabbath Day. Our Lord put the question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath Day to do good or to do harm? To save a life or to kill?" They refused to answer. Their stubborn rejection of the Light moved our Lord to righteous indignation. He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts, and at once proceeded to give relief to the poor sufferer. And then it was that the Pharisees, realising that they would never bend this New Teacher to their ways, took counsel with the Herodians to destroy Him. For before this they had unsuccessfully challenged the conduct of the disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath Day only to find themselves and their narrow conceptions refuted out of their own Scriptures.

What, then, was our Lord's attitude towards the Sabbath?

(1) He recognises it as a Divine institution. He speaks reverently of "the Sabbath," and we may assume that in all matters except those of which the Pharisees complained His observance of it was that of a strict Jew.

(2) He takes pains to explain the true relationship of the Sabbath to man. It is made for man. Not for the

Jew but for all mankind. Not for God's benefit, that He may have a larger share of man's time and thought, but for man's benefit that he may be protected against the tyranny of material things, and under the sanction of a Divine command, enjoy, in perfect freedom from anxious fears for the future, or charge of idleness, twenty-four hours sweet rest after or before every six days of toil. And if any fail to realise the mercifulness of this Divine ordinance, it may be safely inferred that they have had no experience of the almost slavery of unremitting toil for daily bread. It is generally the people who can play every day in the week that want to make others work for their convenience on Sunday.

But man was not made for the Sabbath. There are higher laws than the law of the Sabbath. Man was made for mercy and love, for purity and truth. The law of mercy is greater than the law of the Sabbath. It is right to pull the ox or the ass out of the ditch on the Sabbath Day. It would be a sin against the law of mercy to leave them in pain and misery. Even David did that which was not lawful when he and his followers ate of the shew bread. But he was right in so doing. The law of mercy would have been grievously broken had he and his companions died of starvation or fallen

into the hands of Saul for fear of eating the consecrated food. True, the hours of the Sabbath are fenced off by a Divine ordinance as sacred from all secular toil, all worldly pursuits, but when the higher law of mercy demands, the fence may be broken and Sabbath hours well spent in doing good.

(3). He declares that the Sabbath being made for man, He, as the Son of Man, is Lord of the Sabbath. His dictum is sufficient to settle what is or what is not lawful. But be it well marked while taking pains to mend what was faulty in the Jewish observance our Lord does not give the slightest indication of any intention of abrogating the commandment or of putting an end to the Divine ordinance of the Sabbath.

(*c*). Our Lord's disciples did not fast, though the disciples of John the Baptist were most rigorous in their abstinence. Our Lord justifies this larger liberty. Fasting as an expression of penitence is advocated throughout the Scriptures, but our Lord points out that His presence makes it unnatural and unnecessary. "The children of the Bridechamber cannot fast while the Bridegroom is with them." John the Baptist had called himself the friend of the Bridegroom. Jesus Christ claims to be the Bridegroom, and this claim in the presence of those

who were familiar with the teaching of Isaiah **54**, 5, Jer. **3**, 14, Hosea **2**, 19, and similar verses is tantamount to a claim of identity with Jehovah. This is one of the strongest proofs of the unique character of our Lord's personality. He not only revealed duty as a lamp throws light upon the compass, He modified duty, He altered man's relationship to God, just as the magnetized iron deflects the needle. His presence gave to His disciples a gladness and assurance which made their abstinence from fasting not presumptuous but right.

In all these three cases of the larger liberty the final justification lies in Christ's own Personality. Because He is a Physician, He may freely mix with publicans and sinners. Because He is Lord of the Sabbath, He can allow His disciples to pluck corn on the Sabbath day. Because He is the Bridegroom, it is unseemly to fast in His presence.

(*d*). The question of eating bread with unwashen hands led to important teaching concerning the relative importance of "the commandment of God" and "the tradition of men." Traditions will get established, and while men are as they are it is impossible to avoid them. Yet even the most innocent tradition is liable to become a source of danger. In a land of great heat what rule

could be more excellent than that of washing (*βαπτίσειν*) the hands (having water poured upon them, as Elisha did on the hands of Elijah), before any meal? But evil results had followed. They had come to place the human tradition on a level with the commandments of God. They censured those who did not observe the custom. Contented with their strict observance of this outward ceremonial they were less careful as to their inward condition, the disposition of their hearts before God.

It is so with all human traditions. It is a very ancient custom to bow the head at the name of Jesus in the creed. Every student knows that no authority for this can be found in Scripture. It is an ancient tradition, a habit which savours of reverence. Let no one be asked to give it up, but let those who practise it remember that it is a tradition of men, that they must not censure those who do not bow the head, and let them always be on the alert to see that while careful to bow the head they are still more intent upon bowing the heart.

Our Lord's reply on this subject was searching and thorough. First came the quotation of Isaiah **29**, 13, and the solemn charge that they had left the commandment of God in order to hold fast the tradition of men.

Then our Lord proved to them how this leads in certain cases to the complete annulling of God's law, quoting the common practice of Corban, by which unfilial sons could leave their parents to die of starvation and yet maintain a reputation for entire consecration to God. Having thus answered the Pharisees on the general principle, He calls the people around Him and makes plain to them by a single epigram the moral danger attaching to this particular custom of frequent ceremonial ablutions. "There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him; the things which come out of him, those are they that defile him." But so indoctrinated were they in the false views of the Pharisees that even the disciples could not understand the parable. Watch your heart, not your mouth, the Saviour says. What you touch or eat has no power to defile the man within. But the evil thoughts that spring up, pride and hatred, falsehood and impurity—these things make you unclean. Surely our Lord would say the same to those who follow so religiously the tradition of fasting communion. It is a tradition that directly contradicts the example of our Lord, Who instituted the sacred meal in the evening and after supper, and it is also beset by the same moral danger that was attached to

the ceremonial washing of the Pharisees, viz., that minute care as to what food passes the mouth may take the place of watchfulness over the heart.

(*e*) Far more serious than any of these criticisms was the charge of collusion with Beelzebub. This was made by the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem. Our Lord met it by the simple question, "How can Satan cast out Satan"? A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. The strong man must be bound before anyone can enter his house and spoil his goods. Let it be clearly understood, that once Satan is in possession no charms of music, or philosophy, or science, or art will lead him to give up his prey. He must be vanquished and driven out by the might of Emmanuel, by the power of the blood of the Lamb.

But having thus refuted the charge, our Lord proceeds to show the awful sin which the making such a charge involved. None could thus ascribe the good deeds of the Lord Jesus to the agency of Satan unless by quenching the Holy Spirit, they had become deadened against all spiritual influences, a state which, by the very nature of things, since the Holy Ghost is the only author and giver of true repentance, is a state of eternal sin.

(*f*). There was more than lies on the surface in the

demand of the Pharisees for a sign from Heaven. Our Lord, we are told, "Sighed deeply in His spirit, and said: Why doth this generation seek a sign?" But has not every generation made the same mistake? How prone we are to stumble at the continued silence of God and to long for vision, or voice, or outward manifestation of some kind instead of being content to walk by faith. Signs, let it be clearly understood, are no help to faith. It was a faithless and unbelieving generation that provoked God to anger in the wilderness, and yet their every meal was supplied by a miracle Satan is always suggesting to us that if some special sign were granted to confirm our faith we should cease to doubt, but doubts come from hell and however the outward signs might be multiplied, the lying suggestions of the Evil One would be more numerous still. As soon as Gideon received one sign he wanted another. These Scribes had had reliable testimony, and perhaps ocular demonstrations, of Christ's divine power, and yet they asked for a sign from Heaven. To our Lord this was a subtle temptation, a re-opening of the conflict with Satan in the Wilderness. Why not cast Himself down from some wing of the Temple? Why not summon ten thousand angels to escort Him in aerial flight from

the summit of Olivet to the Temple Courts? Why not, by some display of Divine power, compel these stubborn Jews to see and believe? But not this way lay the Father's will. A coerced faith would have no power to purify the heart or bring men near to God. Let all who are tempted to think that something more might be done to make men believe remember the words in the parable of Lazarus and Dives, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead." It was the knowledge that the unbelief of the unregenerate heart can never be banished by any outward sign that made our Saviour sigh deeply in Spirit as He watched wilful unbelief taking firmer hold of that generation.

(*g*) At last, however, the main citadel was attacked and a deputation of chief priests, and scribes, and elders, put the question, "By what authority doest Thou these things?" Our Lord replied by a counter question, "The baptism of John, was it of Heaven or of Men?" They were afraid to answer. They knew it was from Heaven and that all its influences were for purity and truth. They dared not say it was of Men, for such an obvious falsehood would endanger their reputation with the people. To say it was of Heaven would be to

acknowledge themselves in the wrong, for they had refused to believe in him. So they took refuge in dishonest silence and said, "We cannot tell." This is the favourite device of unbelievers to-day. "We cannot tell," they repeatedly declare, whether there be a God or whether man has an immortal soul. "We cannot tell" whether right and wrong are essentially different, or whether our ideas as to the superior excellence of righteousness and purity are mere prejudices inherited from our forefathers. A sad nemesis has overtaken the intellectual pride of this generation. Things that no one wants to know concerning this material universe they will tell you with assurance, but to the questions which the heart of man is always asking, What am I? Who made me? Whither am I going? Is there a life after death? Can sin be forgiven? Is prayer any good? To all such questions they have but one answer, "We cannot tell."

But these Jerusalem agnostics were dishonest. They had not been asked any abstract question of philosophy but concerning a plain matter of fact. And most of the difficult questions which agnostics declare themselves unable to answer may be reduced to similar plain matters of fact.

Those who question the existence of God we point to the Jewish nation and ask, What is the secret of its unique career? The agnostics say "We cannot tell." It is a dishonest answer. They dare not give the Bible explanation, and no other reasonable one can be found. Those who question the life after death we refer to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and ask, What became of the dead body that was laid in Joseph's sepulchre. The agnostic says, "We cannot tell." He dare not give the Bible explanation, and no other reasonable explanation can be found. Or, we ask, Was Jesus Christ a good man? If so, why did He claim to be the Messiah, the Saviour of men, the Son of God? And the only escape for the unbeliever is to say "We cannot tell." An honest answer to this question compels a man to accept the Christian position. Nor need we go back to ancient history. We ask, "The Welsh Revival—is it of Heaven or of men. The change that has taken place, say, in some drunkard's home (and the writer knows of many such), when Christ "breaks the chains of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free," is that of Heaven or of men. The conscientiousness of the Christian man of business who surrenders a good situation rather than sully his soul with business lies. The steadfastness of

the soldier in the barrack room who kneels, night after night, at his bedside in spite of taunts and jeers and petty persecutions. The hope that cheers the mourner by the open grave, and enables the cancer patient to bear his pain calmly and cheerfully. Are these from Heaven or of men? Are they real or are they delusions? The agnostic dare not answer. The Christian knows.

(*h*) The question concerning the tribute money was easily answered. The principle involved is of permanent value. There are things which belong unto Cæsar. The secular arm is not to be wielded by the Church. When Cæsar claims our money he is only asking for his own. Money is "this world's good," just as Love is "Heaven's good." It is, therefore, to be handed over without any qualms of conscience. The use he may make of it is his concern. Our duty ends when we recognize his authority and pay him his due. Rendering to Cæsar such things as are Cæsar's never interferes with rendering to God such things as are God's. In those things which he is responsible for even a Pagan Cæsar is God's minister to us. We give to God when we give Cæsar his own. If, however, Cæsar asks for the things which belong to God, as when Nebuchadnezzar demanded worship for his golden image, we have no

choice, "we must obey God rather than man." But when Cæsar demands tribute money he asks for that which is his due.

(*i*) The hypothetical question concerning the woman married to seven brothers was put by the Sadducees. It is the first mention of them by name in this Gospel. They were the aristocratic and priestly party (see Acts **5**, 17), and resided principally in and near Jerusalem. When in Galilee, our Lord's opponents had been Pharisees keenly interested in matters relating to their cherished traditions. At Jerusalem our Lord comes into conflict with the chief priests. His sweeping away of the market in the Temple was an open condemnation of their rule. They did not trouble about doctrine or ceremonies, but they were tenacious of their power and prestige. They would not accept any Messiah who did not acknowledge their authority and undertake to keep them in place and power. The efforts of the priests were mainly directed, therefore, to securing from our Lord such an assertion of His own authority as would justify them in denouncing Him before the Roman Procurator as a rival to Cæsar. In Galilee such an assertion would have been hailed with enthusiasm, for the independent Northerners had no love for the ruling powers. But in

Jerusalem the chief priests, being in office, were wedded to the present state of things, and in the end sentenced our Lord to be guilty of death simply because He openly and with Holy Scripture on His lips claimed to be the Messiah.

The object of this present question was simply to gain an advantage over their rivals the Pharisees. The Pharisees and Herodians had been discomfited openly in their question about the tribute money, the Sadducees hoped to follow up their advantage by succeeding where they had failed. Our Lord's answer is memorable for two things. For the clear teaching that the dead when they shall rise will be like the angels of God, and for the emphatic statement that all misunderstanding or error concerning the resurrection of the dead comes from ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of God. Then to show that the Old Testament is not silent on this question of the Resurrection, our Lord quotes the passage from the Book of Moses how, in the place concerning the Bush, God spake unto Him and said: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This settles the question, for God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, therefore, still live

unto God. And our Lord solemnly adds to the discomfiture of the Sadducees, "Ye do greatly err."

(*k*) The scribe who put the question "Which is the first commandment of the law" ought hardly to be counted as an opponent. For Christ said to him "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." Our Lord's reply is of supreme importance. Love is the essence of true religion. Love is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Love is the greatest power in the world.

It is at this point that our Lord advances from Holy Scripture His claim to be more than David's son. There is absolute unity beneath the surface of things between ethics and doctrine. Faith is quite as much a moral as an intellectual exercise. Our Lord had come across (it was a real oasis in the desert) a man not far from the Kingdom of God. One sufficiently free from the hardening and narrowing influences of Pharisaic pedantry and Sadduceean scepticism to recognize that the love of God is the essence of all religion. That man was in a position to grasp the supreme truth that the One occupant of the Eternal Throne Who claims and deserves the entire love of man is not a lonely Deity. A Son shares the Throne. To One who was

David's Lord as well as David's son Jehovah said: "Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." How, unless the Messiah was more than man, could David's Son be called his Lord? More was gained than the silencing of His opponents. "The common people heard Him gladly." Needy ones had often greeted Him as a Son of David. At last surely some inkling of all that this meant of glory for the Christ, of blessing for His own, and of humiliation for His adversaries, began to dawn upon them. One thing was clear—the teaching of the new Prophet was vastly more spiritual and Scriptural than the teaching of the scribes, and as they listened to the terrible indictment of the scribes, which followed for their hypocrisy and greed and love of prominence they knew that Christ was speaking the truth.

CHAPTER V

Our Lord and His Own

JESUS CHRIST is continually set forth in Holy Scripture as the one centre of attraction for all honest souls. In proportion as men are true to their highest instincts—the desire for truth and righteousness, the craving for peace and satisfaction, the longing for holiness and usefulness—they are drawn to Jesus Christ as the One who can most effectually help them. Indeed the welfare of every individual soul is fixed for weal or woe both in time and for eternity by the one criterion of its relationship to Jesus Christ.

That relationship in the case of the Lord's own, *i.e.*, of all who believe and obey the Gospel, is set forth very simply in the words of Christ Himself, "Ye belong to Christ," 9, 41. Christ annexes to Himself the heart and soul and life of every true disciple. He is by Divine

appointment and in virtue of His redeeming work, supreme Sovereign and Lord of all mankind, and as such He assumes complete ownership, and claims to exercise absolute control.

This sovereignty is implied in the title the Son of Man. It occurs fourteen times in this Gospel, it is the name which our Lord used of Himself, but which none of His disciples, except dying Stephen, used of Him. It means that Christ is the perfect or ideal Man, not the Man of any particular age or country, but the Man of the Race, the Man of all ages, the One who perfectly fulfilled all that is required of man. Those moral obligations which are entirely independent of age or country or calling and which no man, whatever the difficulty of discharging them, can shirk without prostituting and belittling his manhood—the Lord Jesus perfectly discharged. He is the Master Man, and all who want to excel in those qualities which constitute true manhood must learn of Him.

The first indication of this sovereignty of our Lord in this Gospel is found in the testimony of John the Baptist. His witness to the personal superiority of the coming Messiah was most emphatic. "I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of His shoes," so

spake he who was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb concerning the only sinless One, even He who was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of a pure virgin. He specifies, too, the superior benefit to be derived from the Messiah's ministry. "I baptize you with water, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

This is the essential element in our Lord's relationship to His own. It is not based upon natural ties of kinship or nationality or outward organization. It depends upon a secret spiritual union brought about by the working of God the Holy Ghost. The true Christian, whether he be Jew, Greek, or Barbarian of the first century, or English or Japanese or Kaffir of the twentieth century, is one whom the Lord Jesus has baptized with the Holy Ghost. He is possessed of a new spirit. A fire of sacred love is kindled in his heart.

There are doubtless many professors in whom this new spirit is not seen. Many who have been baptized with water are still strangers to the working of God's Holy Spirit in their hearts. They are Christians in name only. Christ's ownership of them is nominal, not real. James 1st was titular King of France, but he never received a shilling of revenue, nor a single recruit from

that country. Even in the case of the chosen twelve, Christ's ownership of them was not thoroughly effective until they were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. "No one can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." No one can give to the Lord Jesus that supreme dominion over his whole inward being and outward conduct which is His right until he is baptized with the Holy Ghost.

This sovereignty and ownership of the Lord Jesus implies real fellowship and separation for all His disciples. He bids us first to come to Him, then to follow Him. We not follow Christ without forsaking sin. There can be no fellowship without separation. So Simon and Andrew leave their nets, the Sons of Zebedee bid farewell to their father, and Matthew quits for ever the receipt of custom.

One there was who was not willing to forsake all and follow Christ, **10**, 17-22. He came to the Saviour intent apparently on spiritual gain. He went away unblessed and very sorrowful. As it stands it is a disappointing story, and we cannot help hoping that there is an unrecorded sequel to it. But no such sequel is given. The story is purposely finished or left unfinished at this point. One whom Jesus loved for his

good qualities failed to stand the test put to him, and went away sorrowful and perhaps despairing.

The test was put by One who would not break a bruised reed, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light. It shows us that apparent severity is sometimes the truest kindness. It was because Jesus loved this young man that He put to him the test which revealed to him his own unsatisfactory condition. We learn, too, that underneath much outward goodness there sometimes lies a thoroughly rebellious and unsurrendered heart. How much excellence there was in this young man. There was a consciousness of spiritual need. Rich as he was he had not become so engrossed in the things of this life as to ignore the needs of the life to come. His question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" reveals the yearning of a soul that could not be satisfied with the comforts and pleasures of this life. And he came to Christ with the question. He was convinced from what he had seen of the Lord Jesus that from Him, if anywhere, he would learn the true way of peace and holiness. So he was a man of good spiritual instincts and of blameless morals, and yet his heart was not right. At the critical moment he made a fatally wrong choice. He preferred treasure on earth

to treasure in heaven. He preferred the good esteem of men to fellowship with the Crucified. He lacked wholeheartedness. This was the fatal flaw which vitiated his whole character.

The people of God are sometimes charged with being narrow and uncharitable in their judgment of men. The old tests, we are told, are obsolete. The world is full of honourable, benevolent, unselfish men who have never known anything of conversion or the new birth. But this rich young man was all that, and yet lacked the one thing needful. His heart was not right, and when the moment of trial came he turned back and chose the world before Christ.

And yet he thought he was all right. He did not know how completely the world had come between him and God. He would not have come into the searching light of Christ's presence nor have declared himself perfect in the righteousness of the law had he suspected that all this goodness was superficial and accidental. He looked up into the Saviour's face and asked, "What lack I yet," (see Matt. **19**, 20) without the least idea that his heart was empty of all true religion. He knew he was not perfect. Something more he was prepared to do to win eternal life, but until the test came he had no

idea that his whole life was wrongly focussed, that self was his real God.

This lack of wholeheartedness, this fatally false estimate of spiritual things was the result of defective knowledge of Christ. Christ had said, "Come, follow Me, lay aside your wealth that you may have treasure in Heaven." The world said: "Follow me and keep your riches to minister to your happiness now." Of the world he had only seen the best side. He was still young, and hitherto the world had served him well, for thus far he had not abused it, he had not consciously put the world before God. But now that the world had mastered him and he had turned away from God for its sake he would soon learn the hollowness of its pleasures and the utter impossibility of satisfying an immortal soul with its dead and stagnant waters. Of Christ he knew still less. He gave Him the complimentary title, "Good Master," which Christ refused to accept. He did not know that that supreme goodness which belongs to God only was shared by Jesus Christ. No wise man would leave all for the sake of one who is only a little better than himself, equally liable to mistakes and misgivings and subject to change and degeneration. But St. Paul, who knew Christ well,

said, "What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ." A clear knowledge of Christ causes a complete *bouleversement* of all our ideas of profit and loss. Before Christ is known, that is gain which adds to our personal comfort and credit, and that is loss which detracts from it. When Christ is known, He becomes our *alter ego*, and we lose ourselves in Him. All then is profit which adds to His joy, that alone is loss which detracts from His glory. There is only one place for self when Christ is fully known. It is the place which this young man refused to occupy. Are we meant, men ask, literally to sell out all our investments, and giving everything to the poor to reduce ourselves to a condition of beggary. We are to do more than that. We are to put self on the Cross and keep it there. Money-questions will soon be settled then. Who would heap up luxuries upon a crucified self, or who would crave honours for a dead self? But we shall not hesitate to leave all when we know what it is to win Christ. To cultivate a deeper knowledge of Christ is the one way to keep our hearts right towards God.

The Lord's ownership of His people leads to a new kind of kinship. "Whosoever shall do the will of God the same is my brother and sister and mother" (**3**, 35).

The tie which binds us to Christ transcends all other ties. It strengthens, as a rule, the natural ties which bind us to our family and calling, but whenever, in times of backslidings and divisions, "a man's foes are those of his own household," every other alliance must give way before the sovereign claims of Jesus Christ. Christ does not deny our other ties. Each one belongs to his country, his city, his social circle, his profession, his family. So there are duties of patriotism, of citizenship, of society, of a profession, of the home. But the duty to Christ comes first. "Blood is thicker than water." Our union with the Lord is a blood relationship indeed. We are purchased by His blood, His rights over us take precedence of all others.

All the responsibilities of ownership belonging to Christ, He demands from us simple reliance and fearless, unquestioning faith. On one occasion Christ and His disciples were crossing the lake of Galilee in a fishing boat. Tired out with His labours, Christ was asleep in the stern of the boat. A storm of wind arose, and the waves broke over the side, so that the boat began to fill with water. Hardy fishermen though they were, the disciples' hearts were filled with fear. They could not trust a Christ who seemed unconscious of their peril and

took no visible steps to save them. "Master," they cry, "carest thou not that we perish?" But when the storm was hushed and the danger passed Christ rebuked them. "Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?" Christ expected His disciples to trust Him without fear, even when the boat was filling with water, and He seemed to be indifferent to their danger. What leader ever made such an extravagant demand on the confidence of his followers? But what leader could ever say, with such absolute truth and such depth of meaning, "You belong to me?"

Christ was always teaching that faith dispels fear. To Jairus, heartbroken at learning that his daughter was dead (the child's life had flickered out even while the Lord of Life was on His way to the sick room) Jesus said, "Fear not, only believe." Christ's ownership of His people is so effective and He is so completely equal to all the emergencies of life that no excuse remains for fear.

Where there is fear there is unbelief, where faith is perfect there is no fear.

Christ's ownership of His people will not free them from suffering. "Whosoever will come after Me," He said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and

follow Me." Only crucified and dead souls can really follow Christ. The Lord Jesus is no apostle of self-culture. He is the first Disciple and the Divinely-appointed Professor of the Cross. To follow Him we must take up our cross. No one in our Lord's day carried a cross unless he had been condemned to death. We must daily take the place of one who has been condemned to death. Now self is always seeking to evade the cross. How men labour and strive to guard their reputation, to maintain their prestige. This is what Christ calls saving one's life. The main object of the natural man is to save his life; to maintain his honour and position. But Christ says: If you would follow Me you must daily take up the cross. For Christ's sake and the Gospel's we must be content to lose our life; to let go all claim to our own righteousness, our own strength, our own choice. This self refuses to do. Therefore self must be denied, and we deny self by enthroning Christ. Every heart, it has been well said, has both a throne and a cross. If Christ is to have the throne self must be on the Cross. If self takes the throne then Christ is driven to the Cross. So they who would follow Jesus must learn to keep self on the Cross. To be content to lose their life, *i.e.*, to sacrifice comfort and reputation and

vain glory and selfish ease for Christ's sake and the Gospels. And in so doing they fulfil the highest instincts of their manhood. The Son of Man came to give His life. The secret of progress and blessing lies not in self-preservation or self-culture, but in self-crucifixion and self-sacrifice. This is not without some measure of shame. Christ felt the shame of His arrest in the garden. "Are you come out as against a thief?" But if we refuse the shame, if we are not willing to suffer for Christ now, He will be ashamed of us in the day of His triumph and glory. We belong to Christ. We belong to the Man of the Cross, the Man of Golgotha. We must be prepared for some experience of the Cross in our own lives if we really follow Him.

This ownership of Christ greatly enhances the solemnity of life (**9**, 41, 42). It adds heinousness to sin and fresh beauty to every act of unselfish love.

It is always right to do a kindness to others, to give a cup of cold water (this in the East may often require considerable labour) to a thirsty soul. But Christ declares that if the water is given in His Name, if the kindness is shown to any because they belong to Christ its reward is certain. In like manner it is always wrong to lead men astray. But so sacred is the relationship

between Christ and even a little child that to do anything to make a Christian child stumble is such a crime that a man had far better be hanged than be guilty of it. So this relationship of Jesus Christ to the race adds infinite importance to all our intercourse with men. Christ has brought eternal happiness within reach of every human soul. We in our daily contact may either help those around us, refreshing them with a draft of the water of life or we may make them stumble by some thoughtless criticism or foolish sneer. To help men is to help them nearer to Christ and Eternal Life. To hinder them is to drive them from Christ into eternal misery. So all life becomes intensely sacred. The Christian can never afford to be flippant or careless. So infinitely blessed, indeed, are the fruits of present fellowship with Christ that rather than risk any dislocation of our union with Him we had better of our own choice part with eye, or hand or foot. Better far a maimed body and a soul in perfect fellowship with Christ than perfect health of body and estate and a numbed or paralyzed soul.

But what will be the final outcome of this fellowship with Christ? At the very first it implies separation, the fearless confidence of faith, some measure of the Cross with its suffering and shame, and greatly increased

responsibility attached to every detail of our intercourse with men, but what more? Peter wanted to know (**10**, 28). Do not blame him for it. The desire for happiness is not an unworthy instinct. The Lord told him plainly: He who hath left anything for "My sake and the gospel's" shall receive hundredfold now with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life! And then comes the significant words, as full of warning as of promise: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first" (**10**, 31; see also Matt. **19**, 30—**20**, 16). St. Peter had said: "Lo, *we have* left all, and have followed Thee." We are not like this poor young millionaire who prefers the enjoyment of his wealth to the following of Thee. So while the Saviour's heart was full of pity there was a tendency to self-complacency in the hearts of Peter and the apostles. What that complacency would lead to, if not checked, Christ has shown us in the ugly portrait which belongs to this context of the discontented labourers in the vineyard. Once the spirit of self-complacency and covenanting for reward begins to prevail, the eye, even of apostles, may become so evil that the abundance of Divine grace to the outcast will call forth murmuring rather than praise. Such a spirit unchecked would

make them like the elder son in the parable of the forgiving father. So while the Saviour emphasizes the certainty of reward—spiritual joy now, exceeding hundredfold any loss we suffer for His sake —and eternal life in the world to come; He reminds us that many that are first in privilege and service, will be last in honour and reward. Not the amount of the work done, but the kind of spirit manifested by the worker, determines the reward. It will be all in vain that they have borne the burden and heat of the day unless the broken heart and the tender spirit are maintained throughout. It was the lack of this that kept the Scribes and Pharisees outside the kingdom when publicans and harlots were pressing in. The last shall be first if they offer the sacrifice of a broken or contrite heart, the first shall be last, apostles as well as chief priests shall be last, if they give way to pride.

CHAPTER VI

Our Lord and His Bible

The quotations from Malachi and Isaiah at the very beginning of the Gospel, chosen in order to establish from Scripture the Divine authority of the Baptist, are the only ones given by St. Mark himself. The words "He was numbered with the transgressors" (**15**, 28) are omitted in most of the best manuscripts. But as an accurate reporter St. Mark brings out clearly the value which our Lord set upon the Old Testament Scriptures and the effective use He made of them.

His various formulæ of quotation deserve attention. In **7**, 6 a double form of reference is used. The author's name is mentioned, and we have the common but impressive statement "it is written." "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written." The author's name is mentioned again in **7**, 10, where the fifth com-

mandment is quoted with the introduction "Moses said." In the parallel passage St. Matthew puts it "God said," for the law was given by God through Moses. The next two quotations are introduced without any author's name being mentioned. In **11**, 17 a beautiful blending of two verses from Isaiah and Jeremiah is introduced by "is it not written," and in **12.** 10, when quoting a verse from the 118th Psalm, the authorship of which is unknown, our Lord says, "Have ye not read this Scripture?" So also the quotation from Zechariah in **14**, 27 is introduced by the simple "it is written." Names are mentioned again in **12**, 27, "Have ye not read in the book of Moses in the place concerning the Bush?" and in **12**, 36 there is a still more emphatic reference to the author. The argument turns upon David himself being the writer of the Psalm; so our Lord introduces it thus: "David himself said by the Holy Ghost," emphasizing the dual origin of Holy Scripture the commingling of the human and divine elements.

On more than one occasion our Lord gave clear and definite teaching as to the authority of Holy Scripture. In refuting the unbelief of the Sadducees, which underlay their question about the resurrection of the dead, our Lord said, "Is it not for this cause that ye

err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God?" (**12**, 24). So also He charged the Pharisees "with making void the word of God through their tradition" (**7**, 13). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," He declared. And when arrested in the garden "This is being done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (**13**, 31, and **14**, 49).

These references will be found to justify the following five conclusions. Our Lord quoted written documents, not floating folk-lore or tradition—documents of such unique value that they were known as the Scriptures—*i.e.*, the writings.

These writings contained definite and distinct predictions which were fulfilled in Himself. This is brought out in fuller detail by the other evangelists.

These writings were through human channels. Moses, David, Isaiah are mentioned as authors of various parts.

These writings are of Divine authority and full of Divine power. They are "the word of God." They are put on the same level with "the power of God." They are the work of the Holy Ghost.

A study of the various quotations will show that our Lord's Bible—written, predictive, human, and Divine—

was the same as our Old Testament. If asked whether we believe in the Old Testament we answer without hesitation, "We believe, for our Lord believed, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament as the Word of God." We are called to follow the blessed steps of His most Holy Life, and one of the steps in which we must follow Him is His thorough knowledge, and reverent and affectionate use of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Our Lord's use of the Scriptures was twofold. He used them homiletically and controversially for others, He used them devotionally for Himself.

By quoting Is. **29**, 13 our Lord cut at the root of all that ornate formalism and elaborate ceremonialism which is so dear to the carnal mind. He pointed out the inevitable consequence of giving undue weight to the precepts of men, to those unauthorized additions to worship which, though well meant originally, are not found in the word of God. They lead to empty worship the mind occupied with outward trivialities, the heart far from the living God.

In **11**, 19, a mingling of Is. **54**, 7 and Jer. **7**, 11, our Lord balances this warning against externalism by an equally powerful lesson against irreverence. "Is it not written," how the words must have impressed the

wondering and ashamed multitude! "My House shall be a house of prayer for all the nations, but ye have made it a den of robbers." Truly the word of God was a sharp two-edged sword that morning to convict the priests and elders of their criminal greed and profanity.

Still more convincing is the quotation from the 118th Psalm in **12**, 10. His own approaching death He had clearly and explicitly foretold in the parable of the murder of the son of the Lord of the vineyard. But they were not to imagine that such a crime would be crowned with lasting success. So our Lord discomfits His adversaries and strengthens His own soul by a verse of Holy Scripture. "Have ye not read this Scripture?" —of course they had, and they had applied it to the Messiah, but they never realized that their rejection of Jesus Christ was the literal fulfilment of it, and they were confounded to learn that, however they might destroy Him, His exaltation was certain, for this was the Scripture: "The Stone which the builders rejected the same was made the head of the corner."

Equally effective is the quotation from Exodus in **12**, 26. Detecting the carnal ignorance that underlay the question about the future resurrection of the dead, our Lord points out that the dead live unto God, not

for carnal relationships, and proves it by the familiar expression, "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob."

Once more all His adversaries are reduced to silence by the question founded on the 110th Psalm, "David himself calleth Him Lord, whence is He his son." If any other Psalmist had called Him Lord the difficulty would not have been so great. David's son might well have been Asaph's Lord. But how could David's son be David's Lord. The fifth commandment requires that David should be honoured and reverenced by his Son. This Psalm shows that David showed Him reverence, and that Jehovah made Him co-partner with Him of His throne. The mystery of the Incarnation is the only answer to our Lord's question, and whatever may be said of our Lord quoting other Scriptures by the current nomenclature, honest exegesis demands the conclusion that our Lord definitely declares and meant to declare that this 110th Psalm (in which the whole Epistle to the Hebrews lies hidden) was written by David.

Our Lord's devotional use of the Scriptures may be seen in chaps. **14** and **15**. His enemies have been convicted and confounded, but the hour of darkness is at

hand. Before the agony of Gethsemane our Lord finds comfort and support in singing one of the inspired Psalms (**14**, 26). Probably it was the great Hallel consisting of Psalms 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, all of them full of jubilant praise, the last one containing clear reference to the exaltation of the rejected Messiah. The singing of hymns is one of the best helps to a life of fellowship with God. Family worship is not what it should be unless a hymn is sung. After the hymn our Lord began to speak of the tragic events that were at hand. He saw the disciples about to stumble and forsake Him. But as He sees Himself abandoned and left alone, He finds comfort in Scripture. He turns to Zech. **13**, 7, and from that nook and corner of His Bible He quotes, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." So "it is written," and that is enough. He leans upon Scripture and finds it rock Later on He is handcuffed and led away like a common felon. But all is well, since "it is written." "All this is done," this is His supreme comfort, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."

So when on His trial before Caiaphas. The prosecution having broken down, the judge seeks to condemn the Saviour out of His own mouth. Our Lord meets

the question "Art thou the Christ" with a quiet "I am," and finds support in that critical moment, when by claiming Messiahship He was sentencing Himself to the Cross, by recalling and quoting Daniel's prophesy concerning the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.

So again in that hour of spiritual desertion, when darkness covered the earth, and the soul of the sinless Jesus, made sin by God for us, passed into the outer darkness of the wrath of God, then the written Word of God pillowed the heart of the sufferer, and in the words of the 22nd Psalm, He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The Old Testament was our Lord's only weapon in conflict and His chief solace in suffering and death.

CHAPTER VII

Our Lord and His Work

What did our Lord come to do? What was the true inward purpose of His mission and ministry? Moses, Joshua, Elijah, John the Baptist—each of these had some definite work to accomplish. What was Jesus Christ's work? Was it to teach to reveal the Fatherhood of God and introduce into human goodness a new element of love and a new power of loving? Was it to organize a Church, to start a new Society, "the order of the good Samaritan," to carry out His principle of brotherly love? These were side issues undoubtedly of Christ's ministry. Christ taught, He revealed the Father, He spake as none other man spake. He founded a Church, though its real organization is spiritual not ecclesiastical, and it was not fully constituted until the Day of Pentecost. But neither of these was his

primary vocation. "He came to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." He came to die "for our sins according to the Scriptures."

Always and everywhere the Christian Church has viewed the death of the Lord Jesus not as a catastrophe or mistake, but as the Divinely chosen end of the one sinless life, the only possible way in which His sacred vocation could be fulfilled. Such was the teaching of the first Christian sermons as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Such is the teaching of the epistles, and the unanimous testimony of every Christian catechism or liturgy, whether Latin Church or Greek Church, whether Church of England or Lutheran or Presbyterian. Is it the teaching of the Gospels? Is it historically accurate to say that Christ's chief work was to die for our sins according to the Scriptures, or was this an afterthought, an interpretation put upon our Lord's mission after His tragic death had blighted all hopes of a successful earthly career? Did Christ come to die, or was His death a disastrous check to His enterprise which the disciples cleverly turned to good account by inventing the doctrine of a propitiatory sacrifice?

No Bible student can hesitate for a moment as to the answer. If all roads led to Imperial Rome, it is certain

that all Bible paths lead to the Cross. Let this Gospel tell its own tale. We will not ask what was St. Mark's view of Christ's mission, for it is the part of a special correspondent not to interpret phenomena but to record them, but by examining our Lord's own words and deeds we will ask how far they reveal that He was from the first conscious that His real work would be accomplished, not in power and glory, but in the shame and weakness of the Cross.

St. Mark's account opens with our Lord's baptism in the Jordan. It was a baptism which involved the confession of sinfulness and sins. And it was administered by John to Jesus Christ, who had no sins to confess. Then for the first time Christ voluntarily numbered Himself among the transgressors. His accepting baptism was a beautiful act of loving communion with our sinful estate. The Sinless One identified Himself with us sinners. It was His first step to Calvary, and it won the Father's immediate and open benediction. Notice the wording of the Divine approval. They are a joint quotation from the second Psalm and the 42nd Chapter of Isaiah. They would remind our Lord of His dual office as King and Sacrifice, Victor and Victim. Our Lord in accepting a sinner's baptism, qualified as

the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and at once heaven pronounced Him to be acceptable, a Lamb without spot or blemish.

The Temptation St. Mark sums up in one sentence. "He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan." But we know the character of this prolonged temptation. The main object was to turn away our Lord from the appointed path of suffering and rejection. Our Lord refused to relieve his own necessities or to display His own power or to gain the kingdoms of this world by means of an alliance with Satan—He overcame in the wilderness by steadily cleaving to the path which led to the Cross.

Our Lord's first distinct reference to His death is in Chapter 2, ver. 19. He is defending His disciples for not fasting on the ground that the joy of His presence had changed their whole outlook upon life. But at once He changes the picture from a wedding to a funeral. "The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them." Why this abrupt change? Why such an unnatural sequel? Wedding festivities are not as a rule interrupted by the death of the Bridegroom. But Christ knew it would be so in His case. He saw that the new joy which was filling the hearts of

the disciples was incompatible with fasting, but he foresaw how in a moment that joy would be turned into sorrow as they witnessed the strange and tragic death of the Bridegroom.

The third chapter indicates how that tragic death would be brought about, for we find Pharisees and Herodians in close alliance, all their mutual jealousy and rivalry disappearing in their eagerness to destroy Jesus. The bitter and implacable enmity which the ruling powers entertain towards our Lord is clearly revealed in the charge of the scribes which came down from Jerusalem. Men so hardened and reprobate, that they formally accused the Good Samaritan of collusion with Satan, were not likely to be turned aside from their cruel purpose.

In Chapters **8, 9,** and **10** we have three distinct statements from our Lord as to His approaching death. The first of these was on the way to Cæsarea Philippi. Our Lord had just drawn from Simon Peter the simple but grand confession of faith "Thou art the Christ?" Christ accepts Peter's confession, commends him highly for it, and enjoins secrecy. Then He proceeds to explain what lay before Him as the Messiah, the Son of Man. It was a new departure in His teaching. He

had waited until they had learned the first lesson, that He was in very deed the Christ, the Son of Man. Then He began to teach them a second lesson. "The Christ must suffer and be rejected and be killed, and after three days rise again." He spoke of it openly and freely without any fear of weakening His influence over them by confessing the ignominious end which lay before Him. It was a startling announcement, and the disciples were not prepared to receive it. Peter, somewhat elated perhaps at Christ's recent commendation, thought that His Master was giving way to gloomy forebodings and took upon himself to rebuke the Lord for it. This part of the story St. Mark tells in full. There is no concealment of Peter's shame, it is given with emphasis and in detail. "Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." But our Lord, "turning about" to arrest the attention of the company and speaking not hastily but with calm judgment rebuked Peter severely, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." In the voice of the ardent disciple assuring Him that He need not anticipate rejection and death the Master heard the whisper of Satan, the temptation with which He had wrestled in the wilderness, urging Him to

evade the Cross, and to win the faith of men and dominion over the world in some easier way.

What is the purport of the word "must"? "The Son of Man must suffer and be rejected and die." Whence arises a necessity so urgent that the thought of avoiding it must be resisted as a suggestion from hell? No outward circumstances could bring upon our Lord such a commanding constraint. Though all Jerusalem should conspire against Him, the Son of Man would feel no necessity to give Himself up to their malice, unless the Father's will had so ordained it. It is the will of God, not the power of His adversaries, which constitutes the must. It is the "must," not of an inevitable martyrdom, but of an indispensable sacrifice. His vocation is to suffer. He cannot accomplish the work He came to do unless He is rejected and slain.

The two next passages, **9**, 31 and **10**, 33, both contain the word "delivered." "The Son of Man is delivered up in the hands of men." "The Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes." He is delivered up by God, Who from all eternity had appointed this one Sacrifice for the expiation of sin. It is interesting to notice that these same three occasions are recorded in St. Matthew and St. Luke as well as in St.

Mark. That they are perfectly distinct occasions can be seen from the different attitude of the Apostles. The first time Peter openly declared his disapproval. The second time the disciples were silent. "They understood not the saying, but were afraid to ask Him." The third time the statement was preceded by a most impressive incident. They were all going up to Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus was somewhat ahead of His disciples, and there was something in His carriage and mien which filled them with astonishment. "They were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." Then it was that, with more detail and mentioning that Gentiles should take part, our Lord declared how "they shall mock Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall kill Him."

Certainly the Cross was no surprise to our Lord. Its shadow lay across every step of His earthly pilgrimage. Coming down from the heavenly glory that opened upon Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, He charges His disciples to say nothing of what they had seen until He was risen from the dead. Questioned about Elias, He refers to John the Baptist and his violent death, and put the question, "How is it written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be set at nought?"

When anointed with fragrant spikenard in Simon's house at Bethany, he explains that Mary has been anointing His body beforehand for the burying. When, announcing the betrayal by one of the twelve, He adds, "The Son of Man goeth, even as it is written of Him." And there can be no mistaking the meaning of the plain statement (**10**, 45) "the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

See the setting of this important utterance. John and James had come seeking the first place in the Kingdom of Glory. Our Lord did not rebuke them for their spiritual ambition, but gently and plainly pointed out the only way in which it could be realized. He had spoken of the Cross. They were looking forward to the glory. They should share the glory, yea, they might have the first place in the glory, but on one condition. "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? Or to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" The Cross and passion were holy things to our Lord. The hatred, the scorn, the cruelty of priests and scribes and Roman soldiers were only secondary causes. That deep flood of anguish which would overwhelm Him in the outer darkness was a baptism. The agony that

would draw from Him a sweat of blood was a sacramental cup. And to every Christian there is some measure of fellowship with Christ's sufferings, some baptism of pain, some cup of sorrow. So when the ten are highly displeased with James and John for thus aspiring to the highest place in glory, our Lord seeks to allay their indignation by teaching them this new law of the Kingdom. "Whosoever would like to be first among you shall be servant of all." Lowly service is the path to eminence. It is the path He Himself was treading. Verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many! The Lord serves us by giving His life for us.

But why a ransom? A ransom is only needed when life has been forfeited. The lives of sinners are forfeited. The curse of a broken law overhangs them, the bondage of sin enthralls them. Men seek to save their lives. They look to education and culture, to music and art, to science and literature to save their lives, to develop their faculties, to employ their powers, to meet their hunger. But a forfeited life cannot find ransom or release in these ways. Only by the surrender of Christ's life for us can our forfeited lives be set free.

This is what Christ came to do, to liberate our lives from bondage and death by surrendering His own life to death upon the Cross. In this passage we have the proposition ἀντι "instead of" or "in the place of." It is by the substitution of Christ in the sinner's place that the sinner is ransomed.

In the parable of the rebellious husbandmen there is again the plainest forecast of our Lord's rejection and death. The beloved Son whom the husbandmen should have received with reverence is taken and killed and cast out of the vineyard. The husbandmen are destroyed, and the vineyard given to others. And the parable is proved up to the hilt by the quotation from the 118th Psalm, "The Stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner." The dullest in the audience understood the meaning of this parable, and the infuriated scribes sought to lay hold of Him and yet dared not, for they feared the people.

One more reference remains. The institution of the Lord's Supper, and especially the words "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many" are conclusive evidence to any honest student that our Lord's death was no surprise, no

disaster, no mere martyrdom, but a Divinely appointed and vicarious sacrifice.

This is why the sacred story of the passion is given so fully in all the gospels. It is the decisive battle of the ages, and it has achieved the ransom of mankind. All the details of the fierce engagement are treasured, for many of them were the fulfilment of the ancient Scriptures, and all of them speak to us with constraining eloquence of the heinousness of sin and the all victorious love of God. They totally misread the whole Gospel, who cannot from the heart re-echo the apostle's cry: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The church that ceases to glory in the Cross of Christ loses all real power to serve men.

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